

Appreciate by OTTSTF

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Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

"It made me realise how much I appreciate what everyone's done for me." she says, feeling her eyes water as she thinks about it.

Appreciate

Author's Note:

More eventual hopeless fluff for you beautiful people.

She wakes up suddenly as the loud clicking of locks ring through her ears, and the cold voice she's grown to hate follows.

"Good morning, Eleven." it says, disguising the darkness of his wishes behind a kind greeting.

Eleven says nothing as she rolls onto her back, then sitting up to see the man who she unpleasingly refers to as 'Papa' approaches her, holding a small, square piece of paper. She moves her feet over the edge of the bed, knowing what's about to be demanded of her. Letting her feet contact the freezing cold tiled floor, she stands, wordlessly following the man in front of her.

He leads her to the same old small room, completely void of decoration minus a single table and two chairs. She sits in the first, whilst Papa makes his way around to the other side, slowly taking his seat.

"I want you to find this person, Eleven." he tells her, as she'd expected. He slides the picture over to her, and she allows her eyes to drop from his face of false care to the picture. Her heart leaps into her throat, beating fifty times faster as soon as she sees who today's subject is.

She looks up to Papa, his face growing into a disgustingly satisfied smile.

"I want you to find him, and kill him."

She looks back to the picture, *a boy*, with hair nearly surrounding his face entirely. She has no idea why this face in particular has worked her up so much; she's never left the lab before, yet somehow she recognises this person, and knows deep down that she wants to protect him with all her power.

“No.” she says sternly, although her shaking voice does nothing to help her anger show; instead replacing it with a sound of fear.

“You will do as I say, Eleven.” the man demands. “You will kill him. Quickly, painlessly, however you wish, but you *will* do it. Do you know why?”

She says nothing, holding her face of pure hatred towards the man in front of her. He leans forward in his seat, placing a hand onto her shoulder. She shivers under the touch, as if the mere contact could spread his evil into her.

“If you don’t, we will.” he informs her. “And it will not be fast. It will be slow, and painful. And we will make you watch every second as he screams.”

She cringes at the mere thought, still not understanding why she recognises the face, or why she wants to viciously to protect them.

“You will kill Michael, or we will do it for you.”

“No.” she says again, not letting the threats get to her.

“Eleven-”

She rises to her feet, kicking her chair back. “No.” she says again firmly.

She notices the man’s hand reaching for his pocket, and so with a focus of her eyes towards it, she pulls on it with the invisible force of her mind.

Papa groans in pain as he feels his shoulder dislocate as a result of Eleven’s anger. Reaching for it with his other hand, his eyes land on hers. His face is now a mix of shock and anger, with a hint of fear.

With an upward flick of her head, he’s thrown backwards out of his chair, his back smashing into the wall behind him. The sound of bones cracking fill the air, and Eleven doesn’t even wince as she watches his now lifeless body flop to the floor.

Now worn out, she falls back into the chair, and her head hangs for a

moment as she feels blood run from her nose and ears. She opens her eyes again, head pounding against her skull as the light fills her senses. Wincing through the pain, she reaches for the picture of the boy Papa had wanted her to find. She studies it carefully, still not sure why, or how she recognises him. *Michael*, he'd called him. Why does that ring a bell? Why does she feel so much care towards this person?

She's ripped from her thoughts as the door is flung open viciously. She doesn't even need to look to know who it is. Hearing the clicks of metal, she knows that the dart guns that the staff of this building possess are being aimed at her, ready to knock her out with a painful jab to where-ever they aim.

She hears a trigger pulled, but instead of her vision fading to black, she feels a sudden burst of alertness.

Her eyes shoot open, she lunges upward from her bed, gasping in shock. Her heart is racing, her hair is soaked from sweat. Her head flicks left and right as she grasps her surroundings, quickly realising that she's safe, in her bedroom, in the cabin, with Hopper just outside.

As if on-que, the man comes rushing in, straight towards her bed, kneeling by her side.

"El, hey El, are you okay?" he asks, grasping her hand in his.

"Yes." she nods her head, not exactly a lie, but not exactly the truth, either.

"Do you want to talk about it?"

She shakes her head. "No... just..." she moves to give him a hug.

“Thank you.”

His eyebrows furrow in confusion as he hugs her back. “What for?”

“For everything.” she says against his shoulder. “For taking care of me, for giving me a home. For being my Dad.”

The sudden show of affection warms his heart. His face dances between smiles and disgust as he assumes her nightmare had something to do with the lab that once held her prisoner. For her to suddenly feel a need to thank him for giving her what every child should have by default, he assumes it *has* to be related to those pigs from her past.

“I wouldn’t change it for the world.” he tells her, meaning it from the bottom of his heart.

She lets him go, pulling back to look at him. He quickly settles his expression, not wanting her to see his displeasure of thought.

“Can I see Mike?” she asks, eyes pleading as they always are.

Hopper holds against the urge to roll his eyes, appreciating that the nightmare *probably* included him too in some way or another. He nods his head. “Do you want me to go get him, or would you rather go there?”

“I go there, please.”

He nods his head again. “Go get yourself washed, then come to the table. You’re getting some food in you before you go anywhere.”

“Okay.” she says, smiling in appreciation, jumping to her feet to grab some clothes for the day, before heading to the bathroom.

Hopper heads back out into the kitchen, deciding to prepare a good old Eggo breakfast for them both, considering it’d probably cheer her up a bit.

She stops in her path as she notices the Eggos waiting for them at the table, a smile immediately jumping onto her face. They settle down and eat their breakfast slowly and peacefully, listening to the morning’s news on the radio as they do. Once finished, they grab

their coats, slip into their shoes, and before they know it, they're headed towards the Wheeler house.

The door opens to show Mrs. Wheeler, all warm smiles and happy greets to them both.

"Hello, El!"

"Hello, Mrs. Wheeler." El greets back.

"Hey, Hop." she then greets the man.

"Hey, Karen. Hope you don't mind me bringing her down so soon." he says.

"You know I don't mind." she reminds him. "Everything okay?"

"She woke up from a nightmare again." he tells her, and her face drops to one of compassion. "She's not told me anything about it, but she wants to see a particular *someone*."

Karen smiles, nodding her head. "Well, come on in, honey. He's just getting ready; you can surprise him once he gets down here."

"Thank you." El says to the woman as she walks in.

"Thanks, Karen." Hopper repeats after her. "I'll pick her up around the usual time?"

"Of course." Karen nods her head. "Thanks for bringing her."

"I'd be stupid to deny it." he jokes, backing up towards his truck. "Have fun with 'em." he smirks, assuming they'll be all hugs and affection as soon as they see each-other.

"Oh, *thanks*, Hop." she jokes back. "Much appreciated."

"Always happy to help!" he calls back as she closes the door, shaking her head.

Karen comes to sit with El after grabbing a coffee for them both. El thanks the woman as she takes the cup into her hands, blowing into it softly to cool it down.

“So, do you mind letting me in on what got you so worked up this morning?” she asks El.

El considers shaking her head, but she decides that Karen should know. It involved her son, after all, and it seems only right, considering how much the woman does for her these days.

“I was back at the lab. Brenner... wanted me to kill Mike.” she keeps it simple and to the point.

Karen's eyes fall shut as she thinks of this; from the stories she knows of El and her first week of ‘freedom’ if it could be called that then, she could bet that Brenner probably would try to make her do such a thing.

“You don’t have to say any more if you don’t want to.” Karen tells her.

“Thank you.” she responds.

“I wouldn’t do it.” El tells her. “I never would.”

“I know you wouldn’t, honey.” Karen wraps an arm around her, planting a kiss through her hair.

“I’d die for him.” she tells her matter-of-factly.

“You shouldn’t say that.” Karen says. “But we appreciate it. We love you so much, El.”

“I love you too.” El smiles. “I love him.”

Karen smiles, barely holding back a small laugh. “He loves you too, very much.”

Never in her life did she think she’d be saying those words about her son, so early on in his life. So young, yet already they’re both strongly devoting their lives to each-other. It’s not normal, by any

means, but with these two, it makes sense, even to the boy's mother.

At that moment, they hear footsteps emerging from the stairs.

"There he is." Karen tells El, who smiles immediately.

He pauses in the doorway as he catches sight of her, a smile quickly breaking onto his confused face. El jumps to her feet, practically sprinting towards him and lunging herself at him. He just about catches her, holding her tight as she does the same with him.

Feeling relief flood through her as she feels his arms hold her, she gives him a sudden kiss, which has him wishing he could control his blush. Karen takes that as her cue to shoo them into the basement, to leave them talk about her night with some privacy.

"Alright, take that into the basement, you two. As much as I love seeing you both happy, I'm sure you'd rather talk about things away from me."

El nods her head, smiling, as does Mike. "Thanks, mom."

"Thank you, Mrs. Wheeler." El follows. With that, they head down into the basement, hand in hand. Sitting onto the sofa in there, Mike is the first to speak.

"So. Talk about things?" he asks. "What does she mean?"

El sighs, preparing herself to describe the nightmare in detail to him. "I had a nightmare." she starts off. Mike's face drops already, as he hates hearing anything bad about her.

"I was in the lab, before I broke out. Brenner wanted me to find and kill you."

"Oh, I bet he'd love that." he says, as she nods with a saddened smile. "But, before you broke out? Neither of you knew me then."

"I know." she nods again. "I was confused. I recognised you, but I didn't at the same time. I didn't know who you were, but I knew I

would never hurt you.”

Mike smiles at that despite the circumstance. Even in her dreams, even when taking place prior to their meeting, her subconscious refuses to put him in harm’s way.

“I got mad, so I killed him instead.”

“Oh, I wish.” he laughs, putting a small smile onto her face.

“I woke up after that.”

Mike hums in understanding. “Short, then. But not like that matters... anything about the lab is terrible.”

“Yeah.” she agrees. “It just... made me realise.”

“Realise what?” he asks, face curious as ever. The face she loves to see when they’re talking about her.

“How much I love all of you.” she begins with. “How lucky I got. A year ago, I was still in there. I had no idea the outside world even existed. I could’ve still been there now, but I got lucky, so lucky, and so I met you.”

“Hey, the luck is mutual, remember.” he wraps an arm around her, hugging her close.

“It made me realise how much I appreciate everything you and Dad have done for me.” she says, feeling her eyes water as she thinks about it.

“Hey, hey.” Mike notices her eyes. He places a kiss onto her cheek, before looking firmly into her eyes. “I’d do it all, every single day, if it meant you could live happy.”

“I know you would, Mike.” she nods her head. “And that’s why I love you, so much.” she kisses him back.

The words never fail to send his stomach into butterfly-overdrive. His face heats, but he doesn’t care.

“I love you too, El.” he brings his other arm up to hold her tight,

leaning his head against her shoulder. She automatically leans into his grasp.

“I love you so much.”

They stay like that for a while. Enough words spoken, their grasp on each-other speaks the rest. The millions of words they have for each-other, all transferring through the strong hold they keep on each-other; a metaphor to how they feel about each-other, never wanting to let go.

Author's Note:

I am so hopeless.

I'm not going to make it to season three.

The wait is going to kill me.

help